

Serial No.: 09/662,463
Docket No.: 60655.7600

Amendments To Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

1. (Currently amended): A method for facilitating the distribution of travel-related information, comprising:
 - communicating with a customer over a computer network having a destination expert server, wherein the destination expert server includes an answer database;
 - identifying a plurality of experts, wherein the plurality of experts are in selective communication with the destination expert server;
 - receiving, from the customer, a request comprising customer data and destination question data, wherein the request is received by the destination expert server;
 - associating said the customer data with said the destination question data and storing said the association in said the answer database;
 - facilitating a selection, based on the request, of a destination expert from the plurality of experts, wherein the destination expert has particular knowledge about the destination city;
 - forwarding, by the destination expert server, the request to the destination expert to facilitate the destination expert to communicate with the customer to provide a response to the request;
 - automatically retrieving from the answer database, without intervention by the destination expert, an answer to the customer request, such that the destination expert response includes the retrieved answer and a proposed itinerary relating to the customer request, wherein the proposed itinerary is based upon the particular knowledge of the destination expert related to the destination city, and wherein the destination expert response further includes an offer to book reservations for the proposed itinerary; and
 - enabling an interactive session between the destination expert and the customer to facilitate the destination expert interactively processing travel reservation requests from the customer.
2. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1, wherein facilitating selection of a destination expert comprises selecting a destination expert from among the plurality of experts, wherein the destination expert is located in the destination city.

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3. (Original) The method of claim 2, wherein communicating with the customer over the computer network includes receiving a credit card number from the customer.

4. (Canceled)

5. (Original) The method of claim 1, further comprising receiving the destination expert response from the destination expert and forwarding the destination expert response to the customer.

6. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1, further comprising facilitating a transaction with the customer, wherein the transaction relates to the request.

7. (Original) The method of claim 1, further comprising monitoring communications of the destination expert server.

8. (Currently amended) A system for accepting and responding to a customer request for travel information relating to a destination city, comprising:

a destination expert server, wherein the destination expert server includes an answer database, ~~said the~~ destination expert server configured to receive a request comprising customer data and destination question data from a customer for information relating to the destination city, to associate ~~said the~~ customer data with ~~said the~~ destination question data, and to store ~~said the~~ association in ~~said the~~ answer database;

a plurality of experts in selective communication with the destination expert server, wherein the destination expert server forwards the customer request to a selected destination expert from among the plurality of experts, and wherein the destination expert has particular knowledge about the destination city, such that the destination expert can communicate with the customer to provide a response to the customer request, wherein the destination expert server automatically retrieves from the answer database, without intervention by the destination expert, an answer to the customer request, such that the destination expert response includes the retrieved answer and a proposed itinerary relating to the customer request, wherein the proposed itinerary is based upon the particular knowledge of the destination expert related to the destination city, and wherein the destination expert response further includes an offer to book reservations for the proposed itinerary; and

wherein the destination expert server enables an interactive session between the destination expert and the customer to facilitate the destination expert interactively processing travel reservation requests from the customer.

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9. (Original) The system of claim 8, wherein the customer provides the destination expert server with customer contact information, and wherein the customer contact information is forwarded by the destination expert server to the destination expert.

10. (Original) The system of claim 8, wherein the destination expert is located in the destination city.

11. (Original) The system of claim 8, wherein the destination expert server is accessible to the customer via the internet.

12. (Original) The system of claim 10, wherein the plurality of experts are in selective communication with the destination expert server via electronic mail.

13. (Currently amended) A computer-readable storage medium encoded with processing instructions for implementing a method for facilitating the distribution of travel-related information, ~~said~~ the processing instructions directing a computer to perform the steps of:

communicating with a customer over a computer network having a destination expert server, wherein the destination expert server includes an answer database;

identifying a plurality of experts, wherein the plurality of experts are in selective communication with the destination expert server;

receiving, from the customer, a request comprising customer data and destination question data, wherein the request is received by the destination expert server;

associating ~~said~~ the customer data with ~~said~~ the destination question data and storing ~~said~~ the association in ~~said~~ the answer database;

facilitating a selection, based on the request, of a destination expert from the plurality of experts, wherein the destination expert has particular knowledge about the destination city;

forwarding, by the destination expert server, the request to the destination expert to facilitate the destination expert to communicate with the customer to provide a response to the request;

automatically retrieving from the answer database, without intervention by the destination expert, an answer to the request, such that the destination expert response includes the retrieved answer and a proposed itinerary relating to the customer request, wherein the proposed itinerary is based upon the particular knowledge of the destination expert related to the destination city, and wherein the destination expert response further includes an offer to book reservations for the proposed itinerary; and

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enabling an interactive session between the destination expert and the customer to facilitate the destination expert interactively processing travel reservation requests from the customer.

14. (Previously Presented) The computer-readable storage medium of claim 13, wherein the processing instructions for directing a computer to perform the step of facilitating selection of a destination expert comprises processing instructions for directing the computer to perform the step of selecting a destination expert from among the plurality of experts, and wherein the destination expert is located in the destination city.

15. (Original) The computer-readable storage medium of claim 14, wherein the processing instructions for directing a computer to perform the step of communicating with the customer comprise processing instructions for directing a computer to perform the step of communicating with the customer over the computer network, wherein communicating with the customer over the computer network includes receiving a credit card number from the customer.

16. (Canceled)

17. (Original) The computer-readable storage medium of claim 14, wherein the processing instructions further direct the computer to perform the step of receiving the destination expert response from the destination expert and forwarding the destination expert response to the customer.

18. (Previously Presented) The computer-readable storage medium of claim 14, wherein the processing instructions further direct the computer to perform the step of facilitating a transaction with the customer, wherein the transaction relates to the request.

19. (Original) The computer-readable storage medium of claim 14, wherein the processing instructions further direct the computer to perform the step of monitoring communications of the destination expert server.

20. (Currently amended) A device for enabling customers to access experts located in cities to which the customers may wish to travel, where the experts can answer customer questions and book travel arrangements for the customers, comprising:

a processor;

a storage device in communication with the processor via a system bus, wherein the storage device, and

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a memory connected to the processor, the memory including an operating system for storing a program to control the operation of said the processor, and a destination expert control module,

wherein the processor is operative with the destination expert control module to:
communicate with a customer over a computer network having a destination expert server, wherein the destination expert server includes an answer database;

identify a plurality of experts, wherein the plurality of experts are in selective communication with the destination expert server;

receive, from the customer, a request comprising customer data and destination question data wherein the request is received by the destination expert server;

associate said the customer data with said the destination question data and store said the association in said the answer database;

select, based on the request, ~~of~~ a destination expert from the plurality of experts, wherein the destination expert is located in the destination city and has particular knowledge about the destination city;

forwarding, by the destination expert server, the request to the destination expert-to facilitate the destination expert to communicate with the customer to provide a response to the request;

forward, by the destination expert server, the request to the destination expert, such that the destination expert can communicate with the customer to provide a response to the request, wherein the destination expert control module automatically retrieves from the answer database, without intervention by the destination expert, an answer to the request, such that the destination expert response includes the retrieved answer and a proposed itinerary relating to the customer request, wherein the proposed itinerary is based upon the particular knowledge of the destination expert related to the destination city, and wherein the destination expert response further includes an offer to book reservations for the proposed itinerary; and

enable an interactive session between the destination expert and the customer to facilitate the destination expert interactively processing travel reservation requests from the customer.

21. (Original) The device of claim 20, wherein the identification of a plurality of experts comprises confirming that the destination expert is familiar with the destination city.

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22. (Original) The device of claim 20, wherein communicating with the customer over the computer network includes receiving a credit card number from the customer.

23. (Canceled)

24. (Original) The device of claim 20, wherein the processor is further operative with the destination expert control module to receiving the destination expert response from the destination expert and forward the destination expert response to the customer.

25. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 20, wherein the processor is further operative with the destination expert control module to facilitate a transaction with the customer, wherein the transaction relates to the request.

26. (Original) The method of claim 20, wherein the processor is further operative with the destination expert control module to monitor communications of the destination expert server.

27. (Canceled)

28. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1, further including the step of transmitting the automatically retrieved answer to the customer.

29. (Canceled)

30. (Previously Presented) The computer-readable storage medium of claim 13, wherein the processing instructions for directing a computer to perform further include the step of transmitting the automatically retrieved answer to the customer.

31. (Canceled)

32. (Previously Presented) The device of claim 20, wherein the processor is operative with the destination expert control module to transmit the automatically retrieved answer to the customer.